

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

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Markey Introduces Bipartisan Joseph Moakley Memorial "Fire-Safe" Cigarette Act

Reducing Ignition Propensity of Cigarettes is Expected to Save Thousands of Lives

WASHINGTON, D.C. --

Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA) today was joined by Rep. James V. Hansen (R-UT), Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Senator Sam Brownback (R-KS) in introducing the a bipartisan, bicameral bill that would require the Consumer Product Safety Commission to establish a safety standard to regulate cigarettes sold in the United States with respect to their propensity to start fires. "Each year thousands of innocent people are killed, maimed or permanently disfigured by carelessly discarded cigarettes," said Rep. Markey. "Under a typical cigarette fire scenario, the smoker falls asleep in bed or on a sofa with a burning cigarette, the ash smolders, then bursts into flames often in the middle of the night--a time when everyone is least prepared. "Cigarettes are the leading cause of fatal fires," he continued. "1,000 deaths annually and nearly 2,400 injuries are due to cigarette-caused fires. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), these fires account for \$4.6 billion annually in societal costs and direct property damage."

Rep. Markey is picking up where his late Massachusetts colleague, left off. In honor of Moakley's long record as a champion of this reform, today's bill is titled "The Joseph Moakley Memorial Fire Safe Cigarette Act of 2002."

"We are picking up the torch -- a 'fire-safe' torch -- that Joe Moakley carried so effectively during his career in Congress," Markey noted. Moakley's work on this issue led directly to the development of the ignition standard that Markey's bill would implement as a national minimum standard of fire safety.

Today's bill has brought one major tobacco company, Phillip Morris, on board with its nemesis, The Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids. The International Association of Firefighters, The Congressional Fire Services Institute, and SAFE -- Safer America For Everyone also support this effort.

The bill includes provisions that:

- Require the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) to establish the standard specified in the legislation, by which cigarettes could be regulated with respect to their propensity to start fires.
- Give the Consumer Product Safety Commission authority over cigarettes only for purposes of implementing and enforcing compliance with the standard promulgated under the Act.

- Allow for the future establishment of an enhanced fire-safety standard.
- Allow states to pass more stringent fire-safety standards for cigarettes if they choose.

For further information, visit Rep. Markey's web site at "www.house.gov/markey."

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